

## The Role of Development Communication in Enhancing Community Involvement in Bur Telege Tourism Management

(Peran Komunikasi Pembangunan dalam Meningkatkan Keterlibatan Masyarakat dalam Manajemen Pariwisata Bur Telege)



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**Abstract:** This study examines the critical factors influencing the sustainability of community-based tourism management in Bur Telege, Aceh Tengah, and investigates the effectiveness of development communication in promoting community engagement. The study is based on the assumption that genuine local participation in tourism governance requires open, transparent, and inclusive communication. Using an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods (ESMM) design, the research involved 100 respondents through a Likert-scale questionnaire, complemented by in-depth interviews with six key informants. Quantitative findings indicate that development communication has a significant impact on community engagement, with a Pearson correlation value ( $r = 0.61$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and explaining 37% of the variance in participation levels ( $R^2 = 0.37$ ). However, the mean score suggests that communication effectiveness remains relatively low (mean = 2.1), particularly in meeting attendance (1.7) and the timeliness of information delivery (1.9). Qualitative analysis using NVivo identified several supporting factors, including government support through workforce certification programs, the use of simple digital media (such as WhatsApp), religion-based social capital, and village meetings. Conversely, significant barriers include the absence of a comprehensive tourism development blueprint, nepotism in recruitment practices, community pragmatism, lack of transparency in village-owned enterprise (BUMDes) management, and limited representation of marginalized groups. These findings underscore that effective development communication is a crucial instrument for strengthening long-term community engagement. Therefore, digital-based, transparent, and participatory communication strategies are essential to ensure sustainable tourism management.

**Keywords:** Aceh Tengah; community participation; development communication; tourism management; traditional media.

**Abstrak:** Studi ini meneliti faktor-faktor kritis yang memengaruhi keberlanjutan pengelolaan pariwisata berbasis komunitas di Bur Telege, Aceh Tengah, serta menyelidiki efektivitas komunikasi pembangunan dalam mendorong keterlibatan masyarakat. Studi ini didasarkan pada asumsi bahwa partisipasi lokal yang tulus dalam tata kelola pariwisata membutuhkan komunikasi yang terbuka, transparan, dan inklusif. Dengan menggunakan desain Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods (ESMM), penelitian ini melibatkan 100 responden melalui kuesioner skala Likert, yang dilengkapi dengan wawancara mendalam terhadap enam informan kunci. Temuan kuantitatif menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pembangunan memiliki dampak signifikan terhadap keterlibatan masyarakat, dengan nilai korelasi Pearson ( $r = 0,61$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) dan mampu menjelaskan 37% varians tingkat partisipasi ( $R^2 = 0,37$ ). Namun, skor rata-rata menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas komunikasi masih relatif rendah (mean = 2,1), terutama pada aspek kehadiran rapat (1,7) dan ketepatan waktu penyampaian informasi (1,9). Analisis kualitatif menggunakan NVivo mengidentifikasi beberapa faktor pendukung, antara lain dukungan pemerintah melalui program



*sertifikasi tenaga kerja, pemanfaatan media digital sederhana (misalnya WhatsApp), modal sosial berbasis nilai agama, serta pertemuan desa. Sebaliknya, hambatan signifikan meliputi ketiadaan cetak biru pengembangan pariwisata yang komprehensif, nepotisme dalam praktik perekrutan, pragmatisme masyarakat, kurangnya transparansi dalam pengelolaan usaha milik desa (BUMDes), serta minimnya representasi kelompok kurang mampu. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi pembangunan yang efektif merupakan instrumen penting untuk memperkuat keterlibatan masyarakat dalam jangka panjang. Oleh karena itu, strategi komunikasi yang berbasis digital, transparan, dan partisipatif menjadi kunci untuk mewujudkan pengelolaan pariwisata yang berkelanjutan.*

**Kata kunci:** Aceh Tengah; komunikasi pembangunan; manajemen pariwisata; media tradisional; partisipasi masyarakat.

## Introduction

The development of sustainable tourism is widely recognized as being dependent on community participation. Such participation enhances community empowerment, fosters local ownership, and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared fairly among local residents (Rachmawati, 2020; Siri & Chantraprayoon, 2017; Roberts, 2011). Promoting community involvement in tourism planning and management requires the use of effective communication strategies, particularly participatory communication. Managers of tourism-related businesses can also gain significant benefits from effective communication practices (Satria M et al., 2024; Ahmadi et al., 2023; Sawir et al., 2024). Achieving the intended outcomes further demands harmonious and continuous coordination between the government and all segments of society, as their active participation in decision-making is crucial (Herizal et al., 2021; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Given that participatory communication forms the foundation of development communication, this relationship must be carefully sustained (Musakophas & Polnigongit, 2017). Indeed, participatory development communication serves as the primary mechanism for uniting stakeholders (Kheerajit & Flor, 2013).

Developed nations emphasize the significance of tourism destination management organizations and rely on tourism as a key economic driver (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Similarly, the city of Takengon has grown into a popular tourist destination (Ainin et al., 2020). The Aceh government's requirement for tourism workers to obtain certification under Regional Regulation (Qanun) Number 8 of 2013 represents a sound policy. To increase productivity, however, participatory communication needs to be integrative (Moyo & Salawu, 2018), ensuring the fulfillment of the right to improve community well-being (Paquette et al., 2014). Despite these efforts, several obstacles have been identified, including limited knowledge, insufficient participation protocols, and negative perceptions of involvement processes (Marzuki, 2008; Chili & Ngxongo, 2017).

In 2023, data from the Central Aceh Regency Tourism Office showed that only about 15% of residents in the Bur Telege area were actively engaged in tourism management. An internal study conducted by the research team in 2024 further revealed that 58% of residents felt insufficiently involved in decision-making, and only 22% had adequate access to information about regional tourism development plans, despite government support through the Aceh Qanun. Moreover, the Tourism Development Master Plan (RIDPAR) for Central Aceh has yet to be established (Herizal et al., 2021), making effective stakeholder coordination more difficult and resulting in fragmented tourism management. Communities can only participate meaningfully when they have genuine decision-making authority, rather than being limited to consultation without negotiation power (Arnstein, 1969).

This study seeks to address a gap in the literature regarding how communication strategies can overcome barriers and promote more effective and inclusive community involvement in tourism management (Khazaei et al., 2015; Bello et al., 2018). The influence of communication on community group dynamics and levels of participation also remains underexplored (Khazaei et al., 2015; Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). A deeper understanding of communication's role can contribute to initiatives that strengthen community engagement and

enhance the overall effectiveness of tourism management (Roberts, 2011; Iqbal et al., 2022). In addition to social factors, community involvement and financial sustainability serve as key indicators of successful tourism management (Goodwin, 2020; Freire, 2020).

Bur Telege has emerged as one of Central Aceh's leading tourist destinations over the past decade, with significant potential to strengthen the region's ecotourism-based economy. However, the expected economic gains have been limited due to low levels of community participation. Projections from the Central Aceh Tourism Office for 2024 suggest that the tourism sector's contribution to household income could increase by up to 30% over the next five years if effective development communication strategies are implemented. Against this backdrop, the present study carries strategic importance in promoting tourism growth that is socially equitable, economically empowering, and environmentally sustainable.

This research seeks to identify best practices and provide recommendations to enhance community participation in tourism management by evaluating the effectiveness of various development communication strategies. It also aligns with Prabowo Gibran's Asta Cita vision, particularly in fostering the growth of creative industries, entrepreneurship, quality employment, and sustainable infrastructure development. With a focus on sustainable tourism governance, this study emphasizes the need for inclusive, transparent, and participatory approaches. Accordingly, the study is guided by two research questions: (1) To what extent can development communication effectively encourage active community engagement in tourism management? and (2) What are the key factors that facilitate or hinder the application of best practices for strengthening sustainable community participation in tourism management?

## Methods

This study employed the Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods (ESMM) approach. This design was selected to identify key factors that either facilitate or impede the adoption of sustainable best practices and to provide a systematic, data-driven, and targeted explanation of the relationship between the effectiveness of development communication and active community participation in tourism management. By using ESMM, researchers can develop a replicable explanatory framework based on empirical data, which can then inform the formulation of tourism management strategies and policies (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Ivankova et al., 2006).

The ESMM design was implemented in two main stages. In the first stage, quantitative data were collected through surveys to measure the extent of community participation and the effectiveness of development communication. In the second stage, qualitative data were gathered to explore more deeply the factors that support or hinder community engagement strategies in tourism management (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

## Results

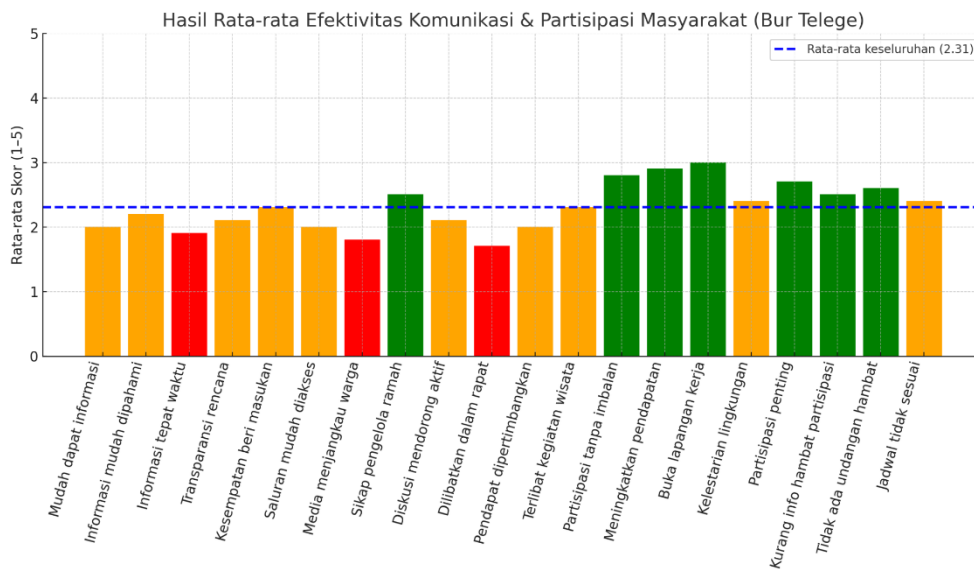
### Quantitative Findings

In the Bur Telege region, only 15% of the community is actively engaged in tourism management, while 68% report feeling insufficiently involved. A questionnaire consisting of 20 Likert-scale items (1–5) was distributed to 100 respondents. The instrument was divided into two components: development communication and community participation. The overall mean score was 2.3, categorized as inadequate. Development communication recorded a mean of 2.1, while community participation recorded 2.4. The detailed mean scores are presented in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Mean Scores of Development Communication and Community Participation

Variable	Indicator	Mean Score
Development Communication	Reach of communication channels	1.8
Development Communication	Timeliness of information delivery	1.9
Development Communication	Participation in meetings	1.7
Development Communication	Overall mean	2.1
Community Participation	Employment opportunities	3.0
Community Participation	Income increase	2.9
Community Participation	Opinions are considered	2.0
Community Participation	Overall mean	2.4
Overall Combined Mean		2.3

A Pearson correlation test revealed  $r = 0.61$  with  $p < 0.01$ , indicating a strong and significant relationship between development communication and community participation. Regression analysis showed a coefficient of  $b = 0.52$  with  $p < 0.05$ . The  $R^2$  value of 0.37 indicates that 37% of the variance in participation is explained by development communication, while 63% is influenced by other factors.



**Figure 1.** Mean Outcomes of Community Involvement and Communication Effectiveness in Bur Telege (Researcher Data Processing Results)

Overall, development communication remains inadequate, and participation is largely limited to economic aspects.

**Qualitative Findings**

NVivo analysis identified supporting and inhibiting factors shaping participation dynamics. Supporting factors include village meetings, mosque announcements, WhatsApp groups, the role of BUMK as a formal village institution, the economic potential of MSMEs, and the certification initiative of the Central Aceh Tourism Office.

Six key informants were interviewed: Village Head Asbul, Village Secretary Syahrul Ramadhan, BUMK Director Fauzuluddin, Supervisory Board Chairman Albar Abdullah, tourism promoter Khalisudin, and Head of the Central Aceh Tourism Office Erwin Pratama. Findings indicate that mosque announcements, informal forums, and WhatsApp groups remain the primary communication channels.

Inhibiting factors include pragmatic short-term orientation, hiring based on social

proximity rather than competence, limited transparency in financial reporting, absence of a Tourism Development Master Plan (RIDPAR), weak enforcement of environmental regulations, domination of local elites in discussion forums, underrepresentation of women and youth, and limited use of digital and creative media.

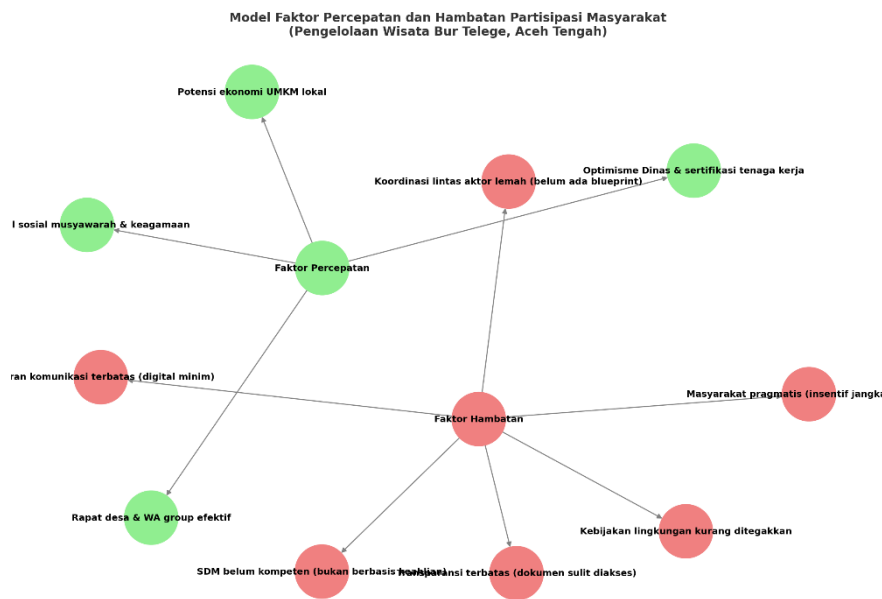


Figure 2. Relationship between Inhibiting and Supporting Factors in Bur Telege Management Visualized (Results of the Data Processing by the Researchers)

NVivo results demonstrate a dialectical relationship between enabling and constraining elements shaping participation patterns.

### Discussion Participatory Development Communication's Effectiveness

Numerous studies have demonstrated that improving community involvement in tourism management requires effective development communication. Ariti et al. (2019) and Kwatra et al. (2020) demonstrate the role of communication in increasing both the acceptability and sustainability of development initiatives. Similarly, Marschlich and Ingenhoff (2021) and Yudarwati & Gregory (2022) highlight that participatory communication can strengthen social capital and foster greater community engagement.

The findings of this study show that development communication in Bur Telege remains inadequate. Low scores in the reach of communication channels, timeliness of information delivery, and participation in meetings indicate weaknesses in transparency and inclusivity. These findings are consistent with Guerrero-Moreno and Oliveira-Junior (2024), who argue that delayed and exclusive communication constitutes a major barrier in community-based ecotourism development.

Community involvement in Bur Telege tends to be pragmatic. Higher scores on employment opportunities and income increase suggest that economic benefits remain the primary driver of engagement. However, the low score on the indicator “opinions are considered” reflects limited involvement in decision-making processes. This finding aligns with McKenna & Hanrahan (2024), who note that communities often prioritize short-term economic gains over collective sustainability goals.

The strong correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ) and regression result ( $R^2 = 0.37$ ) confirm that development communication significantly influences community participation. However, since 63% of participation variance is explained by other factors, as also emphasized by Syamsiyah

et al. (2025), structural and socioeconomic conditions must also be considered in policy formulation.

These findings indicate that strengthening transparent, inclusive, and dialogic communication patterns is crucial for moving participation beyond pragmatic involvement toward sustainable tourism governance.

### Media Use in Tourism and Development Communication

Research by Ainin et al. (2020) highlights the strategic role of social media in promoting destinations and understanding public perceptions. In Bur Telege, communication patterns still rely primarily on face-to-face forums and WhatsApp groups. While effective within limited local networks, these channels remain insufficiently inclusive for broader segments of society.

Marschlich & Ingenhoff (2021) argue that participatory communication through digital media can enhance social capital. Conversely, Guerrero-Moreno & Oliveira-Junior (2024) caution that communication gaps and delays may hinder the development of community-based ecotourism. The low scores in timeliness (1.9) and meeting participation (1.7) reflect such limitations in Bur Telege.

The underrepresentation of women and youth in decision-making forums corresponds with findings by Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2020), who observe that women are often less represented in technology-driven tourism governance. McCall & Mearns (2021) emphasize that meaningful empowerment must extend beyond symbolic inclusion, covering economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions. Similarly, Hoang & Le Minh (2025) highlight that women are often portrayed as cultural actors rather than decision-makers in tourism narratives.

Therefore, digital communication strategies in Bur Telege should not only function as promotional tools but also as participatory platforms that enhance representation, inclusivity, and meaningful engagement across community groups.

### Conclusion

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analysis indicate the effectiveness of development communication in encouraging community members to take an active role in tourism management. The quantitative results show a positive association, with a correlation value of  $r = 0.61$  and development communication accounting for 37% of the variance in the degree of community involvement. In other words, the more transparent, inclusive, and open the communication efforts by local governments and tourism management, the greater the opportunities for the community to participate actively in organizing, implementing, and evaluating tourism-related activities. However, these outcomes are not entirely ideal, as communication remains primarily one-way and does not fully allow for interactive dialogue.

Moreover, two categories of factors significantly influence the adoption of best practices in community participation: internal and external. Internal factors include socioeconomic status, education level, community awareness, and a shared goal of preserving sustainable tourism. External factors include the presence of community groups, local leadership, government policy support, and the quality of development communication. Common challenges include limited community representation in planning forums, the dominance of certain actors in decision-making, and unequal access to information. Conversely, communication strategies that are open, collaborative, and community-centered have been shown to accelerate participation.

This study demonstrates that Bur Telege tourism management can increase the reach of development communication through the use of media, including traditional media like village meetings and basic digital media like WhatsApp. The effectiveness of communication medium still has to be increased, though, as seen by the lack of long-term planning, the lack of transparency, and the dominance of some actors in the decision-making process. In addition to

restricting pragmatic interests, innovation in the use of more interactive digital and creative media can help to increase collective community awareness, which will promote tourism.

Consequently, the effectiveness of development communication not only determines the level of community involvement but also serves as a strategic tool to reduce barriers and strengthen factors that support long-term community participation in tourism management.

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### Conflict of Interests

The researcher declares that there is no conflict of interest in writing the results of this scientific article.

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